

# The Spy Mania in Europe To-day

By EDMUND BROWN.

"SPIES? Europe is full of them and there is not a Chancellery on the Continent that doesn't receive some new proof daily that political intrigue is just as amazingly perfected by the nations of Europe as in the days before the war when Bern was the center of the world's espionage."

This analysis of the espionage problem as it exists to-day was given to me recently by one of the French Government's spy detectors, an agent who for more than twenty years has spent most of his time in the company of France's enemies, and in scores of cases has succeeded in obtaining evidence which has resulted in the arrest and conviction of notorious adepts of that most reprehensible profession—espionage. He has worked in Bern during the social exploits of the notorious "Lady" Beckley, who was not a "Lady" at all but an erstwhile waitress whose beauty the Austrian Government found advantageous as a lure for unsuspecting diplomats. The series of documentary thefts by the former German officer known as "Karl the First," long suspected to be the working chief of Germany's spy system, were unraveled by my informant, and "Karl the First" only escaped capture in a foot race over the Franco-Swiss frontier. During the war the trail of the beautiful half breed danseuse, Mata Hari, was first picked up by the French agents at Bern through a careless bit of conversation between two minor German spies on the platform of a street car, and for nearly a year the ablest of French detectives scoured the espionage haunts of Bern, Lucerne and finally Geneva for missing details of evidence which finally sent Mata Hari to the execution post, with a squad of blue clad poilus appointed to wreak the army's revenge upon a proved traitress.

"Yes, there are thousands and thousands of spies working in Europe to-day, but their personality and their methods are not of the same finesse as in the old days," continued my informant. "The military spy, as developed by Germany, has no place in the new system. He was always a swashbuckling sort of individual, apparently trying to conceal his profession by a flashy, goose stepping demeanor, and after a little experience our agents were able to pick out his ilk nine times out of ten. To-day any military spying that is done is on the inside, and while every European army has a certain number of recruits from other lands who are pledged to keep their own country informed as to new discoveries, this phase of espionage no longer worries us. It is virtually impossible to keep knowledge of new inventions even from the ordinary public."

"The bigger problem is to keep our political secrets safe, and since the upheaval of nations during the war this is found to be almost impossible. Instead of the big Powers being directly responsible for the general policies of Europe, as before 1914, the little Balkan and Central European nations now play a part in the big game, and their cards are stacked just as carefully as in the old diplomatic competition for power in which England, France, Russia and Germany were the bidders. And this has resulted in one noteworthy change—i. e., no longer are the hotels of Bern and the various salons of the Swiss capital the centers for international spying! Instead, the field has been divided, with Vienna as the rendezvous for the petty, political intriguers because of its comparatively low cost of living, and Geneva as the favored scene of the old style of diplomatic espionage, for no other reason than the presence of the League of Nations with its constant stream of diplomatic messengers, all carrying documents with a potential charm for one or more European capitals."

"Even the household employees of various delegates must be watched continually," continued the French spy chaser. "Less than three months ago the maitre d'hotel in the home of one of the permanent officials of the League at Geneva was caught in the act of spying upon an important conference. He had hidden himself behind a thick curtain and was busy

writing shorthand notes with the aid of a pencil fitted with a small electric bulb attachment when another employee gave the alarm. His notes as well as his clothing are now in the hands of the Geneva police; the culprit himself succeeded in crossing the Italian frontier and in less than a fortnight was reporting his failure to a group of fellow spies in the rear room of a third class Vienna cafe."

"And this is only one of many such cases, most of which the League officials naturally do not allow to be noised abroad. It would be interesting to know how many letter sacks and diplomatic valises have been stolen while en route from London, Paris, Brussels and Rome. A recent incident of this kind occurred in Paris when one of the League's own messengers was relieved of an important parcel of correspondence under the very eyes of the

lay himself open to their luring, are no longer in vogue. When the League first appeared in Geneva the hotel dining rooms, various ballrooms and fashionable gathering places suddenly experienced an unprecedented feminine clientele. Among these were recognized some of the old habitués of the Berne spy center; they had come from Vienna, from Rome, from Athens and all other international headquarters to ply their old trade—looking for stray bits of information which might be sold to interested governments. But the grizzled diplomats of the League were put on their guard, and the word went out that great discretion must be used in meeting the women of Geneva; clerks were told that their positions were at stake if they talked too much to their fair charmers from abroad, and in less than a year the "spy detectors" reported



The world war's most conspicuous woman spy. Mata Hari, the Javanese dancer, executed at Vincennes in 1917.

French police. This is an old trick, however, and no one but a novice should ever be caught by it. It merely consists of two or three members of the spy group following their prey until in an unguarded moment he happens to leave his suitcase or mail pouch out of his sight. Three minutes is then sufficient for the spies to make good their escape. In one case last year a League Council member's private secretary dozed in his compartment with an apparently stylish, monocled Englishman as his only companion. During a brief halt the secretary stretched his legs on a station platform—and while he was away from his compartment the English gentleman had tossed a small valise containing League papers to a waiting confederate in the carriage aisle. The Englishman himself left the train at the next stop, after profusely apologizing for annoying the dozing secretary—and the papers were not recovered. The Englishman, we now know, was no other than an Italian, educated in England, who has been in the employ of nearly every European Government and is now suspected of spying for the Russian Soviets. But the League isn't to be blamed for these occasional lapses of neglect; it has taken European nations centuries to checkmate spies only occasionally, and there is every possibility that Geneva will long continue to be the most fertile field for such operations, especially if the League does not develop the fraternity of nations for which it was founded."

But just as interesting as this retention of old methods at Geneva is the fact that female spies, fashionably dressed and ready to charm any diplomatic victim who may

sible for the murder of King Alexander and Queen Draga, and later added the Archduke Francois Ferdinand to its list of victims. During the war it even planned to do away with the present ruler of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as well as M. Patchich, Serbia's leading statesman. To-day it is looking for new victims, according to detectives who know the Vienna situation, although its almost nightly meetings in the Cafe Museum opposite the Naschmarkt seem to the outsider to be merely beer drinking bouts, with an occasional political argument.

Just as dangerous to Europe's future is the meeting place of the so-called Committee of Albanian Patriots—a dingy, smelly cafe just off the Josefstaedterstrasse. It was here that Essad Pasha was condemned to death, and the young Albanian student given the funds with which to come to Paris, first to ransack the desk of the Albanian official and then to slay him in front of the Hotel Continental. But every member of this group is a spy, with the secrets of Jugo-Slavia as his particular objective, and as the committee's attitude has become openly hostile during recent months Belgrade has had to counter its influence by instituting a spy group of its own in another Viennese bierhaus.

The Serbian Government has considered the situation so serious that it has placed its Vienna outpost under the control of the famous Irfan Balleff, known in his own country as the "Terrible Ivan." His job is a multiple one, for no sooner had he started to spy upon the actions of the Albanians than the Montenegrin element and the Mohammedans of Jugo-Slavia each became militant, with the result that to-day Vienna is seething with dangerous intrigue which may at any time develop the basis for a new Balkan conflagration. One effect of the "Terrible Ivan's" presence, however, has been the removal of the headquarters of the National Croatian Club to Budapest, where in common with Austrian monarchists it is working for the collapse of the Central European system devised by President Wilson in the treaty of Versailles. It still maintains a few trained agents who meet in the Cafe Imperial in Vienna, which is also the headquarters of the Montenegrin revolutionaries, described by the police as "as sincere a lot of cutthroats and political thieves as ever existed in spy ridden Europe."

Two other factions, but each with far-reaching espionage services, have developed alarmingly in Vienna during the last year. The first of these is the Bolshevik Russian group, and almost any night in the Cafe Fuchs, the Cafe Herrenhof or the Piccola one can find the Moscow agents receiving reports from their spies returning from the big capitals of Europe. They are closely watched by both the agents of other nations and the representatives of the Russian Emigrants' Committee, headed by the Prince Gregoire Troubetskoi—and in many cases the spies of the latter organization have actually succeeded in denouncing the Red spies to the Vienna police, with sufficient proof to obtain their expulsion from Austria. In addition, the Turks are becoming very active in Vienna and, with the Egyptians and Bulgarians, have let it be known that the Cafe Atlantis will always find a willing ear to hear grievances against and to conspire against the safety of England and her possessions.

"Is it any wonder," commented the spy chaser, "that Europe is always in a state of torment? Diplomats never know whether their plans are secret or already defeated by a counter scheme devised around the beer stained tables of a Vienna cafe. And nothing can be done, at least until Austria herself becomes more settled, and, after all, perhaps it is just as well not to provoke a change to the old system, as with all these groups under our watch in Vienna and the League itself on the alert at Vienna it may still be possible to avoid troubles in Europe such as were experienced in the days when Berne was the point of concentration for Europe's political schemers."

"The Book of the American Indian," by Hamlin Garland, with illustrations by Frederic Remington, will shortly be published by Harper & Brothers. Both the author and illustrator have enjoyed years of friendly association with the Indians of the West.